THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (c) Formulation and selling of tours to various destinations is primarily undertaken by tour operators, travel agents and State Tourism Development Corporations based on demand and tourist infrastructure available. The Ministry of Tourism has granted Central Financial Assistance to Governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh for development of the Buddhist Circuits. The Buddhist destinations of these States are also being promoted in overseas markets through the India tourism Offices abroad.

Linking of Port Blair with Phuket for promotion of tourism

1712. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that, of late, Thailand has become the main outlet of narcotic trade of Myanmar;

(b) if so, whether it will not be unwise and dangerous to sign an accord to link Port Blair with Phuket for promoting tourism; and

(c) whether there has been a thorough investigation that Phuket is totally free from LTTE operation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (c) The agreement between Phuket and Port Blair provides for cooperation in education and culture, urban development, solid waste management, commerce, investments besides tourism.

Promotion of Medical Tourism

1713. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a comprehensive scheme has been formulated to promote India as a healthcare destination to attract more foreign tourists;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including the low-cost super-speciality

hospitals/healthcare centres identified, if any, for accreditation and the steps taken to suitably ease the visa regime for the foreign tourists seeking medical treatments; and

(c) the results of any survey conducted to assess the additional revenue likely to be generated through the medical tourism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Tourism have formed a Task Force, headed by Secretary (Health) and senior officials of the concerned Ministries and experts in the medical field, with a view to promoting India as a health Destination for persons across the globe so as to gainfully utilize the health care expertise and infrastructure available in the country. It has also been decided to promote and market India as a Healthcare destination through collaterals/print/electronic and internet media under the Ministry of Tourism's "Incredible India Campaign".

Indian healthcare Federation in association with CII on Ministry of Tourism's pursuation has after elaborate due diligence prepared a guide on select Indian cities and corresponding hospitals for promotion in Health Tourism. Government of India Ministry of Home Affairs has introduced a new category of "Medical Visa" ('M'-Visa), which can be given for specific period to foreign tourists coming to India for medical treatment.

(c) No such survey has been conducted in this regard.

Financial assistance for the Madhav National Park, Madhya Pradesh

†1714. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Madhya Pradesh has sought financial assistance for the Madhav National Park under tourism development scheme;

(b) if so, the amount allocated during the year 2005-06 under the scheme; and

(c) if not, by when the said amount will be released?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.